POLITICAL FEATURE 1-0977 JUNE 19, 1976
DAVID LENT / BEIRUT

BEIRUT CONVOY POSTPONED

ANNCR:

A CONVOY TO TAKE NATIONALS OF WESTERN COUNTRIES OVERLAND TO DAMASCUS ON SATURDAY WAS POSTPONED BECAUSE OF DETERIORATING SECURITY CONDITIONS. FROM BEIRUT, DAVID LENT REPORTS.

VOICE:

THE SCENE OUTSIDE BEIRUT'S RIVIERA HOTEL, EARLY SATURDAY MORNING WAS ONE OF GENIAL CHAOS. MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED AMERICAN CITIZENS AND FORTY OF THEIR NON-AMERICAN DEPENDENTS HAD DECIDED THE TIME HAD COME TO HEED AMERICAN EMBASSY ADVICE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. THEY WERE TO JOIN A BRITISH-LED CONVOY TO DAMASCUS. ABOUT NINETY OF THE PERSONS WISHING TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WERE TO TRAVEL ON THREE CHARTERED BUSES. THE OTHERS WERE TO DRIVE THEIR PRIVATE AUTOMOBILES. I ASKED DIANA SCHLEI, A PRETTY BLONDE GIRL, WHO WORKS FOR MIDDLE EAST AIRLINES WHY SHE HAD DECIDED TO GO.

/// TEXT ACTUALITY ///

WE HAVE TO GO BECAUSE NOW IT SEEMS VERY BAD HERE AND BECAUSE THE COMPANY NEEDS US IN ATHENS. THREE OTHER HOSTESSES ARE GOING WITH ME AND WE'RE GOING THERE AND ARE ACCOMPANYING OTHERS WHO ARE GOING THERE AND OUR COMPANY KNOWS WE ARE GOING...BECAUSE IT WILL BE SAFE THERE. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN HERE IN THE NEXT WEEK. //END ACTUALITY//

A YOUNG MOTHER, PAT SIEBER, HOLDING HER TWO-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER IN HER ARMS, HAD A DIFFERENT REASON.

/// TEXT ACTUALITY ///

BECAUSE FOR THE SAKE OF MY CHILD RIGHT NOW...WE FEEL THAT IF ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN FOR THE WORSE RIGHT NOW.. ITS BEST FOR US TO GET OUT NOW BEFORE IT DOES GET WORSE...BEFORE WE CAN'T GET OUT AT ALL.

///END ACTUALITY///

SHALO OSBEY, A BUSINESSMAN FROM SAN FRANCISCO, WHO HAD BEEN IN BEIRUT FOR FIVE YEARS, IS FINALLY GIVING UP.

/// TEXT ACTUALITY ///

BUSINESSWISE, WE'VE BEEN TRYING FOR A YEAR AND A HALF WAITING, WAITING FOR SO-CALLED BETTER DAYS AND NOTHING HAS HAPPENED. SO THAT TAKES CARE OF IT. THIS WHOLE SITUATION HERE JUST LOOKS VERY HOPELESS FOR THE TIME BEING. I THINK IT'S GOING TO GO ON FOR MONTHS TO COME. /// END ACTUALITY ///

THEN CAME THE DISSAPPOINTMENT. THE ROADS BETWEEN BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS WERE TOO DANGEROUS TO RISK THE TRIP. AMERICAN CONSUL, BILL MAUL, MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT.

///TEXT ACTUALITY ///

WE HAVE BEEN AWARE THAT THE PRIMARY CONSIDERATION ON SUCH A TRIP IS YOUR SAFETY. OBVIOUSLY WE DO NOT WANT TO UNDERTAKE ANY MOVEMENT OF AMERICAN CITIZENS UNLESS WE CAN BE VERY, VERY CERTAIN THAT EVERYTHING IS MAINTAINED FOR YOUR SECURITY -- I WON'T SAY COMFORT -- BUT AT LEAST FOR YOUR SAFETY. NOW WE HAVE JUST BEEN INFORMED THAT THE ROAD CONDITIONS TODAY ARE SOMEWHAT HAZARDOUS. THE PEOPLE THAT HAVE ARRANGED FOR THE ESCORTS, THE PEOPLE ON WHOM WE MUST DEPEND FOR YOUR WELLBEING AND SAFETY, HAVE TOLD US THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IT'S SAFE TODAY.

/// END ACTUALITY///

THE TRIPARTITE SYRIAN, PALESTINIAN COMMITTEE WHICH HAD ESCORTED A SMALL BRITISH-LED CONVOY TO DAMASCUS ON FRIDAY, SAID THAT CONDITIONS ON SATURDAY HAD DETERIORATED. THE COMMITTEE SAID IT COULD NOT ASSURE SAFE ARRIVAL OF THE CONVOY IN DAMASCUS. G SECURITY CONDITIONS TO SEE WHEN THE CONVOY MIGHT GO. AND THE PERSONS WHO WISH TO LEAVE MUST WAIT.

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